

DUNN COUNTY
LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION DIVISION



**THE MISSION OF THE LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION DIVISION
 IS TO PROTECT, PRESERVE, AND ENHANCE
 THE NATURAL RESOURCES OF DUNN COUNTY**

In 2015, the Land and Water Conservation Division (LWCD) provided planning, technical, and financial assistance to landowners of Dunn County and implemented many State and local conservation programs that improved water quality and insured long term soil productivity. At the top of the list of special projects that I was involved with as the County Conservationist was the creation of the Red Cedar Demonstration Farm and the realization that the only thing that can clean up our water is healthy soil. Another milestone accomplishment was E.P.A. approval of the TMDL Implementation Plan for Lakes Tainter and Menomin. The Civic Governance model used by The Red Cedar Partnership (the group of people that will oversee implementation of the plan) reinforces the fact that citizens, people who work and live in the watershed, are the key to cleaning up the water.

I have asked each member of the Land and Water Conservation staff to write a short article on significant things that they were a part of in 2015. This will give you, the reader, an indication of the variety of resources and issues that we address and an opportunity for you to become familiar with the capable and talented staff of the Land and Water Conservation Division. If you have specific questions on any of our programs or natural resources in general, please contact us at 715-232-1496 or use the link to our Division on Dunn County’s website at <http://co.dunn.wi.us> .

Respectfully Submitted, Dan Prestebak, County Conservationist

2015 LAND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

- ROBERT WALTER.....Chairman
- THOMAS QUINN.....Vice Chair
- GARY BJORK.....County Board Member
- KITZ CLEARY.....County Board Member
- GARY SEIPEL.....County Board Member
- BARB SHANNON.....FSA Representative

2015 LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION DIVISION STAFF

- DAN PRESTEBAK.....County Conservationist
- CHRIS GAETZKE.....Conservation Planner
- AMANDA HANSON.....Conservation Planner
- ROBERT KANER.....Conservation Engineering Technician
- RICHARD MECHELKE.....Conservation Planner
- JANELL NEWCOMB.....Support Specialist
- LEAH NICOL.....Conservation Planner
- LINDSAY OLSON.....Water Quality Specialist

Chris Gaetzke, Conservation Planner

It would take more than one page to describe what it means to be a professional in the world of natural resources management and agriculture. The partnership created by the Dunn County Land and Water Conservation Division (LWCD), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), The Alliance of Dunn County Conservation and Sports Clubs, Inc., Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Lower Chippewa Invasives Partnership, Red Cedar Basin Monitoring Group, and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service were able to give one university student a taste of being in the natural resource management workforce during the summer months.

2015 marked the first year of a Natural Resources Internship offered by the partnership and area businesses which was led by the LWCD and NRCS. The partnership contacted universities in the UW system that had a natural resources-based program. Niklas Anderson, a UW-Eau Claire student studying Environmental Geography with an emphasis in Geographical Information Systems, was chosen for the internship. Nik started in late May and worked until school started again in early September. He worked with each partner listed above in numerous projects ranging from banding ducks to planning invasive species tours.



Nik Holding Purple Loosestrife - An Invasive Species

The internship provided an opportunity to get a feel for what governmental and non-profit organizations do to work together toward common goals. Nik had the chance to work a normal forty-hour week in all types of environments of the post-college workforce. He also attended night meetings held by the partners and weekend work events. He had nothing but high remarks of his experience in Dunn County. Nik was also evaluated by his UW-Eau Claire advisor for his required internship course to graduate. To complete the internship course he was also required to write about the internship and reflect on his experiences, which was hard for him to narrow down to fit the requirements of the course. Toward the end of the internship, Nik was asked to attend the monthly meetings of all of the sponsors of his internship to give a final report and thank the community support for their support and the \$5,000 scholarship he received toward his education at UW-Eau Claire. We are continuing the Natural Resources Internship in 2016 with improvements and more community participation to give another individual the future professional experience needed to become a valuable asset to the workforce.



Nik assisting with the "Sharing Our Resources on the Water" Event

Funding was provided by several of the conservation clubs in The Alliance, Ag Star Financial, Farm Bureau, Lentz Fertilizer, and Save Our Hills Alliance, Inc.

From the Perspective of a Conservation Planner, Amanda Hanson

For Dunn County Land and Water Conservation Division, 2015 has been a year of change. Though we have been focused on land and water conservation throughout the existence of our Division, we evolved from being the Land Conservation Division to becoming the Land and Water Conservation Division. We also left our home of many years in the Agricultural Service Center on the east side of Menomonie, shared with USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, and Rural Development. We relocated “downtown” to the Government Center to join the offices of Administration, Corporation Counsel, County Clerk, Register of Deeds, and Treasurer. We made an effort to create a newsletter, “Water Ways”, to inform all who we are, what we do, and what is happening in conservation.

Along with this change, came a modification in interaction between staff and elected officials. The County Conservationist, Dan Prestebak, asked LWCD staff to individually present to the Planning, Resources and Development Committee on projects we are involved with and the duties we are assigned by the County’s Ordinances and Wisconsin State Statutes. Our staff shared information on topics including the County’s Chapter 20 Non-Metallic Mining Reclamation Ordinance, Animal Waste Ordinance, Nutrient Management Planning, Farmland Preservation compliance, Conservation Aids, tree planting, invasive species, and more. The public that attended these open meetings also had the opportunity to learn along with the committee.

The presentations resulted in increased interaction, learning, and understanding by all involved. As questions were asked of staff, information was provided along with a realization that the elected County Supervisors were eager to gain more knowledge about the Division and the services provided to the public.

In March of 2015, I was asked to be part of a presentation with Supervisor Bob Walter, Chairman of the PR&D Committee, and Dan Prestebak, County Conservationist, at the Wisconsin River Symposium in Stevens Point. This marked the first time for myself, a non-management employee, to be involved in a public presentation alongside management and an elected County Supervisor working as a team. We shared our experiences and what we have learned working together with the public, farmers, educators, special interest groups, and agencies. We also expressed how we have been able to achieve goals for the greater good of Dunn County by working together.

Many of the changes within our Division have been based upon new insights learned from training in Civic Governance and being a member of the Interstate Civic Governance Organizing Agency. We have gained a different perspective in how we do our business and interact with others. This experience has opened the door to different opportunities that we may not have had before, such as presenting at the PR&D Committee Meetings or employees working directly with management and elected Supervisors versus a top down pyramid hierarchy method. Perhaps this is the first annual report that details the achievements of County Supervisors of the PR&D Committee, County Conservationist, and County Land and Water Conservation Employees.

I have shared a few instances with you where utilizing Civic Governance has enhanced our service to the citizens of the County as well as to Dunn County Government. I hope that the County Supervisors have enjoyed these new opportunities as much as our staff has. I look forward to more opportunities yet to come.

Bob Kaner, Engineering Technician

I have worked in the Dunn County Land and Water Conservation (LWCD) office since 1985 and have assisted many of our citizens in properly decommissioning unused, out dated, or failing wells located on their property. The LWCD administers a cost-share funding program that utilizes Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) money to offset the cost of decommissioning a well and ensuring the wells are closed according to DNR standards. In 2015, we assisted with the decommissioning of 7 wells.

What types of wells are there?

Water wells can consist of driven sand points, drilled encased metal pipes or historically impressive hand dug shafts lined with rock, brick or concrete. Many have large concrete storage tanks (cisterns) next to them. These old wells are often located in plain sight but may be hidden by a clump of weeds and brush. They are mowed and farmed around for years often without the current owner knowing it is a well or what can be done to close it properly.



Drilled well at old homestead site



Drilled well with hand pump

Drilled or sand point wells may have a long hand pump on them or be just a stub of pipe sticking above the ground. Some may have a classic wind mill over them with the concrete tank (cistern) next to them. Many are just a pipe stub sticking up in the corner of a home basement floor (this option is not allowed for new wells). These wells are typically filled with clay bentonite chips with costs ranging from \$500 to \$1,500.

Dug wells may be located in a residential or rural area. They are typically 30” to 48” in diameter and 20’ to 40’ deep. Some have lids such as a concrete slab and others are only covered with old boards or scrap metal roofing. Dug wells are typically filled with concrete and then a cap of native soil is put over them. Cost can range from \$1,200 to \$2,200 to decommission these wells.



Dug well with concrete lid

Why decommission these wells?

These wells all have one thing in common...a hole deep into the protective surface layer of the earth to access the water table that lies below. This hole will likely remain open until steps are taken to properly decommission it. Each well poses a threat to our precious ground water resource. With the intent of tapping into the ground water, they each provide a direct conduit to our precious water table. The down side is that each of these holes provides a chance that some form of pollution or contaminant can enter the ground water system.



Windmill well site with concrete cistern tank



30' Diameter x 30' deep dug well covered with boards

For more information please feel to contact me at 715-231-6536 or rkaner@co.dunn.wi.us .

Richard Mechelke, Conservation Planner

A conservation farm plan is a process to help landowners manage their natural resources. It involves an evaluation of the soils, water, plant and animal resources on their property. The plan then offers several alternatives to address the resource conditions identified. Implementation of the plan can help protect the environment on and off the farm.

The process typically starts by producing maps of all the land the farmer owns and operates. A farm walk-over is then scheduled with the landowner. This allows the Conservation Planner (Planner) and the landowner to observe and discuss opportunities to improve the natural resources. During the farm walk-over, the Planner gathers information on crop rotations, tillage practices, manure spreading, fertilizer and pesticide use. This information is then entered into a soil loss equation and analyzed for crop nutrient needs. Several programs can be used for this analysis including the Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE2) and Soil Nutrient Application Planner (SnapPlus).



The Planner will also evaluate the farmstead including the feed lot, manure storage area, and areas of concentrated flow. Any areas that have potential for manure runoff are evaluated and compared to Wisconsin's Runoff Rules for Farmers that are contained in NR151. Other field observations include potential gullies, waterways, stream crossing and other on-farm practices. If concerns are found, surveys and data will be collected for potential engineering plans.

Alternative cropping, tillage, and nutrient management scenarios are discussed with the landowner. A conservation plan, with scheduled changes in management, is produced for implementation. Potential for cost sharing on changes in cropping rotations, cover crops, tillage, nutrient management and engineering practices are explored. A typical conservation farm plan should be reviewed with the landowner every four years.

DUNN COUNTY FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM - FARM INSPECTION FORM	
Landowner: _____	Compliance: _____ Inspection Type (Initial, Final, Compliance)
Location: N5013 170 th Street Menomonie, WI 54751	Date: 12-19-2012
Phone #: 715-505-1582	
Location(s) of land for which credit is claimed: Lucas _____	T2N, R14W, Sec 33 DUNN County
<p>Farm inspections are required every four years to determine if the soil and water conservation standards for the Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) listed below are being followed. To claim tax credits in 2010 and beyond, FPP claimants can only certify that they are in compliance on their tax return if the farm complies with the NR 151 state agricultural performance standards and provisions incorporated in 3-47(CP) State Conservation Standards.</p> <p>If there is a failure to agree on needed measure to achieve compliance, or failure to achieve compliance in the agreed timeframe, the county may issue a notice of non-compliance under s.91.82(2), Stats. That will suspend your eligibility for tax credits.</p>	
<p>A. NR151 - AGRICULTURAL NONPOINT SOURCE POLLUTION CONTROL STANDARDS</p> <p>EROSION CONTROL</p> <p>NR151.02 Sheet, rill, gully and wind erosion. Cropland and pastures shall be managed to tolerable soil loss "T". -Is there a current farm plan? _____ -When was it last updated? _____ -Does conservation plan meet tolerable soil loss according to RUSLE2? _____ -Yes, with modifications to rotation. Fields 12, 20 do not meet TP with current rotation. Soybeans will have to be taken out of the current rotation for those 2 fields. -What are the current crop rotations? _____ -What are the current tillage practices? 2, 1 implement, Soil Slickbar, Chisel disk (spring) -Till Tillage? Several fields in Fall 2012 were tilled after corn harvested. -Tract 55? Fields 5, 7-Needed Waterway Project See Below information (Last page)</p> <p>TILLAGE SETBACKS</p> <p>NR151.03(1) Stream banks No crop producer may conduct a tillage operation that negatively impacts stream bank integrity or deposits soil directly in surface water.</p> <p>NR151.03(2) Tillage Setback See #15 below: DUNN COUNTY SHORELAND/WETLAND ORDINANCE CH 14.7.2</p> <p>PHOSPHORUS INDEX</p> <p>NR151.04(2) Croplands, pastures & winter grazing areas shall average a phosphorus index of 6 or</p>	

Janell Newcomb, Support Specialist

As a youth, were you excited to learn about what types of organisms or aquatic animals lived in a stream, why plants or crops grew in some soils but not others, or what the names of the native or invasive plants were that grew in the woods?

These are just a few of the topics that the Dunn Environmental Education Steering Committee (DEESC) has covered while hosting an Environmental Field Day at the Bjornson Education-Recreation Center near Knapp. Approximately 100 fifth grade students from Boyceville and Colfax Schools were given a hands-on opportunity to learn about stream monitoring, soil properties and tools used to develop a soil survey, forestry assessment, and native and invasive forest plants. Members of the DEESC (Chris Gaetzke, Janell Newcomb, and KaYing Vang), along with volunteers and staff from the DNR, ENS-Land and Water Conservation Division, Lower Chippewa Invasive Partnership, NRCS, and the Red Cedar Basin Monitoring Group shared their knowledge and experience to give these children the opportunity to learn and react with nature.



Environmental Field Day - Soils Presentation



Speaking Contest Winners (Above) & Poster Contest Participants (Below)



Another way to get today's youth interested in conservation and our environment is through participation in the Conservation and Environmental Awareness Speaking and Poster Contests. The contests, open to students ranging from kindergarten through twelfth grade, inspire our youth to learn about the importance of conservation of natural resources and the protection or enhancement of environmental quality by expressing their thoughts through speech or with art work. In 2015, Emma Bergmann (Elementary Division), Kaylynn Imsande (Junior Division), and Brooke Brantner (Senior Division) took first place honors at the County level speaking contest and advanced to the West Central Area Contest in Eau Claire. Both Kaylynn and Brooke won first place honors at both the West Central Area and WI Land + Water Conservation Association's State contest. Brooke and Kaylynn were the first ever State winners from Dunn County in over 25 years of holding the contest.

In 2016, the Conservation Poster Contest was revived in Dunn County and students from Colfax Public Schools participated. The national theme was "We all Need Trees". The students used their imagination to convey their message with art work showing why they thought trees were important. Taking first place at the County level were Sam Ralph (Primary Division), Cohen Martinson (Elementary Division), and Jeanette Hydukovich (Middle Division).

Are you a good steward of the land? In order to be a good steward, you need to know something about the soil and the characteristics that affect its use and management. Is it suitable for crops, pastures, woodlands or wildlife? In order to determine this, you need to take many factors into account, some of which are the site (position in landscape, slope, type and degree of erosion or deposition), soil limitations (the best long-term use of the soil), and land capability classifications (slope, depth of soil material, and drainage).



Land Judging Contest

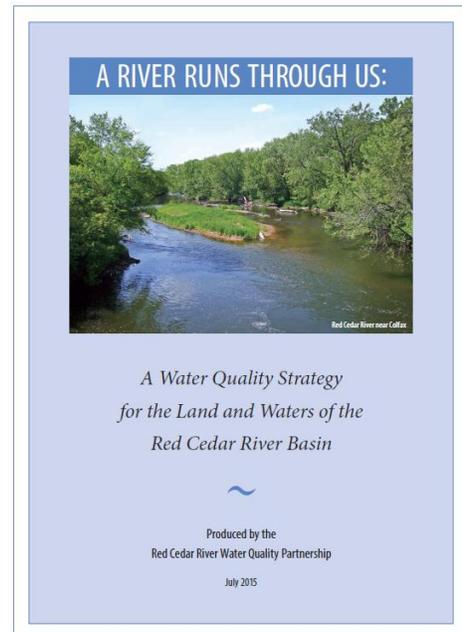
Each year, high school students from Buffalo, Dunn, and Pepin Counties compete in the Tri-County Land Judging Contest. In 2015, over 130 students from six schools participated in the contest that was hosted by Dunn County at Five Star Dairy. The top school in the event went to a team from Colfax High School led by Agriscience Instructor John Nelson. Boyceville High School's Team placed second, followed by Menomonie, Durand, Mondovi, and Elmwood. It was a great learning experience for the students who also got to tour the Dairy after the competition.

Lindsay Olson, Water Quality Specialist

Water quality continued to be a central focus of the Land and Water Conservation Division (LWCD) in 2015. From reducing runoff to improving soil health on farm fields to managing grazing lands to nutrient management planning, much of the work performed by LWCD is tied to water quality.

A key water quality project completed in 2015 was the development of the Red Cedar River Basin Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Implementation Plan. The implementation plan, titled "A River Runs Through Us: A Water Quality Strategy for the Land and Waters of the Red Cedar River Basin," is the next step needed to make water quality improvements following the development of the TMDL by Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in 2012. The TMDL describes the extent of the phosphorus impairments in the lakes and defines the amount of phosphorus reduction necessary to attain improved water quality. The implementation plan outlines the steps needed to achieve the phosphorus reduction.

Dunn County worked with the Red Cedar River Water Quality Partnership to develop the plan and submit it to the United States Environmental Protection Agency for approval. It was approved in April, 2016, which now makes special funds available to put "hammer to nail" on the plan.



A project initiated by the LWCD in 2015 was the Wilson and Annis Creek Watershed project. These watersheds contain 303(d) impaired waters, meaning that the water quality in these streams is impaired due to some contaminant, in this case phosphorus. Two funding sources were applied for and one was granted – National Water Quality Initiative funding through the USDA- Natural Resources Conservation Service. This funding grants a special pool of money for projects within the Wilson Creek Watershed to install voluntary conservation practices on private lands. A partnership of community members called the Wilson and Annis Creek Watershed Partnership has been developed to guide the project. At the time of this writing, eight

applications have been received for projects with 20 more in the queue. The long term goal of the project is to remove Wilson Creek from the impaired waters list.

In response to the high value citizens place on water quality, The Dunn County Board of Supervisors created a new Water Quality Specialist position within LWCD with an aim to bring greater attention and commitment to improving water quality. The charge of the Water Quality Specialist is to implement a wide range of programs to provide information, education, technical, and financial assistance to landowners, citizens, special interest groups and local government.